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Slana Pioneers Challenge The Alaskan Wilderness



Glennallen Realty Specialist Steve Durkee discusses access problems with Mike and Judy Brandt who have staked land in the northern Slana parcel.

Glennallen Area Manager Kurt Kotter and Realty Specialist Steve Durkee met with residents of the Slana land settlement program on June 22 to answer questions and to discuss problems. Approximately 50 settlers attended the meeting held at the future Slana grocery store located on a trade and manufacturing site near Nabesna Road. One of the main concerns expressed by many of the residents was how to gain legal access to the land.

The Slana settlement lands are split into a northern parcel and a southern parcel. The southwest corner of the southern parcel borders Nabesna

Road. Land with road access was the first to be staked, and those who staked away from the road have to cross other people's land to get to their parcel.

The northern parcel is located three and a half miles from the Glenn Highway. Residents of the northern parcel must cross Native land to gain access. BLMers Kotter and Durkee could not provide an easy answer to the access problem. South parcel residents were encouraged to negotiate with their neighbors to obtain rights-of-way. What will be done about northern parcel residents is still uncertain.

The people who have staked land at

Slana are as diverse as the places they came from. Mike and Judy Brandt have always wanted to come to Alaska. Last winter their cabin in the High Sierras in California burned down with all their possessions inside. When they heard about \$2.50/acre land in Alaska, they decided to give it a try. In May they packed their converted delivery truck and drove to Alaska to stake their land. Since they couldn't find land to suit their needs in the southern parcel, they staked land in the northern parcel, only to find out that they had staked on Native land outside the boundaries of Slana. They restaked inside the

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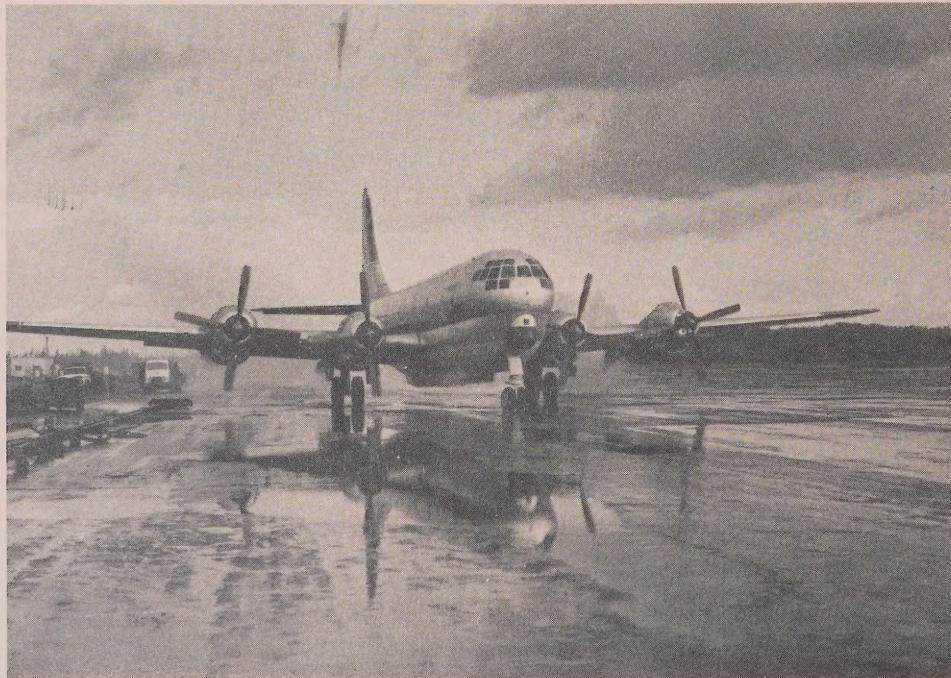
Retardant Planes Provide Vital Support To Firefighters

Each year during the fire season the Alaska Fire Service and the state of Alaska contract air tanker retardant planes. This year's AFS contract, consisting of five 2,000 gallon air tankers, is divided between two companies: Hawkins & Powers of Greybull, Wyo., and Central Air Service of Arizona. Two additional tankers are available on an as needed basis. The contractors' planes are on standby seven days a week from June 1 through August 1, which is the time when most fires occur in Alaska. The state of Alaska has three air tankers under contract. Two are 1,500 gallon Super PBYs which are ex-Navy patrol aircraft under contract with Slafco of Moses Lake, Wash. The third plane is an HP KC-97 owned by Hawkins & Powers, who also has three planes on contract with AFS. The KC-97 has more than double the capacity to carry retardant than any other air tanker in the state. It takes a crew of three to operate the plane — a pilot, a co-pilot and an engineer.

According to KC-97 co-pilot Karl Lampe, "The KC-97 holds 4,500 gallons

of retardant and can also be used to haul cargo." During the last two years Hawkins & Powers has spent \$400,000 to modify the 1952 vintage midair refueling plane, so that it can carry retardant. Computer equipment was also added during modifications so that the retardant drops could be more accurate. Lampe says, "At the present time the KC-97 is the largest active retardant bomber in the world, and it has the capacity to travel across the U.S. without refueling." Although the plane is on contract with the state, AFS occasionally borrows it. This year AFS has used it more than the state has, because most of the fires have occurred on land within AFS's jurisdiction.

Hawkins & Powers is one of the most innovative companies in the air tanker business. During the winter months the company does engineering work on their own planes and for other companies. Owner and pilot Gene Powers was one of the first pilots to fly air tankers in the mid-50s. Powers has been flying air tanker planes for Alaska BLM since 1968.



A KC-97 retardant bomber capable of holding 4,500 gallons of fire retardant.

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A C-119 retardant tanker heading to a fire.

Ladies

The Anchorage Federal Building Health Unit will be scheduling pap smears from now until September. Call 271-5178 to make an appointment.

AFS'S Retardant Crew Jumps Into Action

During the fire season the sound of a bell at Alaska Fire Service's (AFS) retardant site sends the AFS retardant crew and the air tanker pilots running. Retardant foreman Carl Elam and his crewmen Lloyd Smith and Rick DeLouise make sure the air tanker holding tanks are full as the pilots prepare for takeoff. The retardant crew, pilots, and tanker planes are on standby seven days a week during the fire season.

Between loading the planes Elam, Smith, and DeLouise pre-mix the retardant and make sure everything is ready to go when the planes taxi in for refills. Different ratios are used for different fuel types. The formula is thinner for tundra and thicker for spruce. As of July 4 of this year, 91,500 gallons have been dropped on AFS fires this season.

Elam and Smith have worked at the retardant site since 1970. Elam teaches social studies to high schoolers during the winter months. He says, "Working here gives me a nice break from teaching." Smith appraises real estate during the winter months and is writing a novel on the Koyukuk River area in his spare time. DeLouise has been with AFS for three seasons. He lives in Nenana during the winter.

BLM uses two types of retardant: 1) phos-chek — a red powder made of salt, dye and a fertilizer, comes in portable 2,000 lb. bins called phos-bins, and 2) Fire Trol 931, a liquid concentrate transported in by railroad in 25,000 gallon tanker cars.

Wide scale use of chemical retardants first occurred in 1955 when



Retardant crew member Rick DeLouise fills a retardant tanker.

an air tanker program was undertaken in California. Historically "borate bombers" was the term used to describe the aircraft that bombed forest fires with the chemical retardant called borate. Borate (sodium calcium borate) is so abrasive to pumps used in fire trucks that ground application was abandoned in 1956. It was also found that borate is a soil sterilant, and revegetating areas on which borate had been dropped was a problem. A liquid fertilizer is now used as a fire retardant. Liquid fertilizer fire retardants are generally based on ammonium phosphate. They are mixed with water at the rate of 114 lbs. of powder/100 gallons of water. A brick red colored

dye is added to enable the air tanker pilots to see exactly where the drop lands.

Thickening and sticking agents are added to insure adherence of the retardant to the vegetation and to improve the drop characteristics. During field tests on brush fields, retardant without thickening agents was not effective and the brush burned. Brush treated with thickened retardant would not burn and could not be re-ignited several days later.

There are two types of chemicals used for forest fire control—short and long term. Short term chemicals are merely water-thickening agents. Viscous water is applied to a burning fuel in thick layers so that large amounts of heat energy are consumed in driving water off the fuel as a vapor. The resulting cooling action sufficiently slows the fire to permit ground crews to construct physical fire breaks. Long term retardants also thicken water, but they contain additional chemicals consisting of phosphates or sulfates which inhibit burning after the water has evaporated. They act by chemical reaction to stop or slow a fire. Long term retardants work well dry, in solution, or in a slurry form and remain effective until washed off by rainfall. AFS uses mostly long term retardants.

In general fire retardants increase effectiveness of ground crews by strengthening firelines, extinguishing spot fires, providing a delaying action, and providing some safety for the hand crews. Dropping retardant from the air also reduces fire spread until ground crews arrive.

325 Fires Reported To AFS In 17 Days

During the last two weeks of June and the first week of July, 325 fires were reported to the Alaska Fire Service (AFS) in 17 days. Three weeks of warm, dry weather throughout most of the state had AFS forces working at full capacity. While the smokejumpers and ground crews traveled throughout the state fighting fires, the Branch of Fire Coordination kept track of planes, helicopters, equipment, and people. A tremendous amount of logistics is involved in coordinating summer fire activities. During the three weeks of severe fire weather, AFS employees in the Branch of Fire Coordination worked 12-plus hour shifts and had their meals delivered to them at their desks. Although the fire season in Alaska is short, during the few months when most of the fires are reported, AFS is a beehive of activity.



Employees of the Branch of Fire Coordination work long hours coordinating the firefighting efforts.

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boundary, but their only access is wading through three and a half miles of swampy Native land. They hope to build a cabin by fall, live partially off the land, start a mail order business selling jellies, and trap. Right now they are living in their truck until they can get supplies onto the land.

Another Slana resident, Mary Frances DeHart, staked five acres for an art gallery. Her husband Don homesteaded at Slana years ago when many areas in Alaska were open to homesteading. Their ranch, which is located behind the Slana post office, was used as the DeHart's guiding headquarters. Both DeHarts were big game hunting guides in the Wrangel-St. Elias Range before the area became a National Park. After her husband died in 1977, Mrs. DeHart devoted full time to running the ranch and to creating bronze sculptures which are on display at galleries in Phoenix, Ariz., and Jackson Hole, Wyo.

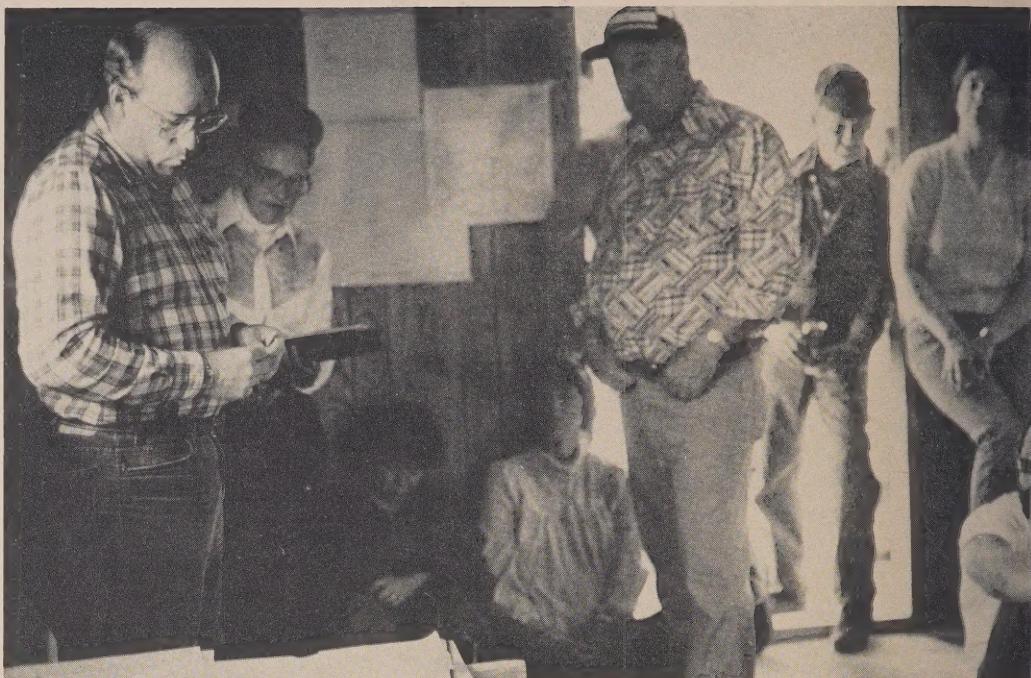
Peter and Barbara Johnson have six years of Idaho wilderness living experience behind them. The Johnsons looked for two weeks before deciding on the site they wanted. Johnson said, "Access and water are the most important things to look for. This is ideal for my wife and me. We feel less remote here than we did in central Idaho where we had to snowshoe 18 miles to get out during the winter months."

Betty Freed and her brother own the future Slana grocery store. She staked her land last fall and headed to California for the winter. Last March she brought up all of her supplies and began building the store. Freed says, "We hope to stock everything a homesteader might need, from groceries to hardware to gloves. We also hope to attract some tourists traveling to Wrangel-St. Elias National Park.

Each settler's idea of what Slana will provide them is different from the next. Some came to find solitude, others came because it gave them the chance to get the start they couldn't get anywhere else, and several stated they enjoyed the challenge of starting a community from scratch in the Alaska wilderness.

Conditions are far from easy. Dust, clouds of mosquitos, and hot weather are characteristic of the short Alaskan summer; minus zero temperatures are typical during the long winter months. There is no electricity, telephones, or plumbing and very little potable water nearby.

Whatever their reasons for being there, a pioneering spirit exists; and the residents have a determination to "make it on the land".



(left) Glennallen Area Manager Kurt Kotter discusses problems with Slana residents.

(right) Slana residents gather at the future Slana store for a public meeting with BLMers Kurt Kotter and Steve Durkee.



(clockwise from left) Home sweet home -- Homes on Slana lands come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes.

ASO Branch Of Personnel Receives Recognition

Seldom in the headlines, usually working quietly behind the scenes, the ASO Branch of Personnel in June received awards for their outstanding efforts and superior performance from January 1982 - September 1983.

As one of his first acts after taking office, State Director Michael J. Penfold presented awards ranging from quality step increases to special act awards.

This was a tumultuous time as the Bureau underwent statewide reorganizations involving more than 800 employees. Affected units included the Outer Continental Shelf Office; Fire Management; Conveyance Management; the Anchorage and Fairbanks district offices; ASO Resource Management, Operations, and Cadastral Survey; and the merger of the Minerals Management Service.

The work involved counseling employees, processing personnel actions and developing a retention roster and tables of organization. Personnel Staffing Section's work increased far beyond normal limits, with total actions processed reaching 2,052 — up 500 from 1981. In spite of this they kept high levels of morale and cooperation through the whole process. The Position and Pay Management Section managed the



(ASO) Branch of Personnel

large numbers of classification actions while maintaining normal workloads and met every deadline. The Employee Programs and Services Section assisted in retirement counseling, employee counseling and in advising management on technical matters. They were especially helpful to new employees

from MMS. The Employee Development Section kept training and employee development programs on schedule despite the upheavals of reorganization.

Congratulations Branch of Personnel on the well-deserved awards!

ADO Crew Gives Blood While Cutting Trail

An ADO trail crew recently became unwilling blood donors to mosquitos while clearing a new one and a half mile trail in the Glennallen Resource Area. Maxcell Graves, Don Lofton, John Pulling, and Bob Lawson spent the last two weeks of June clearing a six foot wide easement for public access from the Edgerton Highway near Kinny Lakes to the Tonsina River. Clouds of mosquitos and temperatures in the high 80s prompted Graves of ADO's Radio Shop to say, "We should have been sent to jungle survival school!"

Another ADO crew has been working on cutting a three and a half mile easement trail from the Edgerton Highway to the Copper River. The crew has completed three-fourths of a mile of the trail so far. Clearing the rest of the trail will be postponed until next year due to lack of funding.



An ADO trail crew clears a six foot wide easement in the Glennallen area.

Softball Builds Character!

"To the victor belongs the spoils!" said F. Scott Fitzgerald. Ale, stout and light beer are hard to classify as spoils, but the victors handily gulped the libations following the ASO "40-plus" softball team's trouncing of ADO's old person team. "The score (17-5) reflects the experience gained from the school of hard knocks," said ASO coach Sal DeLeonardis. With ADO's 4-0 lead in the first inning, the ASO team reached into its depth of experience to pull off a couple of double plays, tightened up its fielding, and "overwhelmed the opponents" with hard hitting to stop any ADO encroachment. A great time was had by all!



Morris Engelke (ADO) takes a swing at the "40-plus" softball game between ASO and ADO.

Anchorage District Issues First Mineral Patent



Miner Howard McWilliams receives a mineral patent from ADO DM Wayne Boden. Anchorage news media were on hand to cover the event.

On June 15 Anchorage District Manager Wayne Boden presented Howard McWilliams with the first mineral patent ever issued by a BLM district office.

Historically, BLM state offices issue mineral patents. In an effort to decentralize its operations, the Alaska State Office transferred its mining adjudication responsibilities to the Anchorage and Fairbanks districts in February 1984. At that time the Anchorage District received authority to process mineral surveys, patents, applications, and contests for the southern half of the state. The

Fairbanks District is responsible for the northern half of Alaska.

In 1948 McWilliams located 40 mining claims northeast of Talkeetna. His efforts to obtain patent to these claims began in 1972 when he submitted a mineral survey application. The application was approved in August 1974; he applied for mineral patent in 1976. Some of the claims were examined by BLM in 1981, and he was awarded a patent to 13 mining claims in 1982. On June 15 McWilliams received patents to the remaining 27 claims which were field examined in the summer of 1983.



Kay Johnson (upper middle) with friends (L to R) Linda Dulac, Barbara Dollman and Robin Rodriguez.

Kay Johnson Retires

by Danielle Allen

What does an energetic 50-year-old BLMer do once he's turned in his retirement papers? If you're Kay Johnson, you operate your own wood products business, and you call it "Lupine Woodworks." It came as no surprise to folks that Johnson would try his hand at running his own business; he is known as an aggressive manager. William "Kay" Johnson is one of two Johnsons to make his mark with BLM. His brother Carl is the Fairbanks District Manager. Johnson's government career started early; in the mid-50s he was fighting fire for the Forest Service. After many fire seasons as a smokejumper he advanced to a fire management officer position. He brought his family to Alaska in 1973 when he became chief of the Branch of Fire Management for the Anchorage District Office. His government career, including military time, spans 28 years.

WELCOME ABOARD
(June)

Joe Savell, Cartographic Technician, ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Susan Patterson, Student Trainee (Land Surveyor), ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Craig Dubart, Student Trainee (Land Surveyor), ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Timothy Flynn, Student Trainee (Cartographic Aide), ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Joan Kendall, Student Trainee (Land Surveyor), ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Elizabeth Williamson, Secretary, ASO Division of Mineral Resources
Elaine B. Kesler, Clerk Typist, ASO Division of Administration
Timothy Ristow, AFS Warehouse Worker
Richard Lundy, Photolithographer, ASO Division of Operations
Leroy Gross, AFS Warehouse Worker
Darlene Morris, Clerk Typist, FDO
Timothy Frank, AFS Warehouse Worker
Jerry Lovelady, AFS Forestry Technician
Steve Johnson, AFS Forestry Technician

MOVING ON
(June)

Robert Cracknell, Supervisory Physical Scientist, FDO (retired)
Rita Kelly, Land Law Examiner, ASO Division of Conveyance Management
Kamilah Rasheed, Supervisory Land Law Examiner, ASO Division of Conveyance Management
Thomas Wright, Student Trainee (Land Surveyor), ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Mark Kildow, Cartographic Technician, ASO Division of Operations
Monna Carter, Realty Specialist, ADO
Gary Lewis, Student Trainee (Land Surveyor), ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Marion England, Natural Resource Specialist, FDO (retired)
Josephine England, Secretary, FDO (retired)
Eric Neilson, Student Trainee (Land Surveyor), ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Gretchen Ahlrichs, Clerk Typist, ASO Division of Operations
Gail Walters, Student Trainee (Land Surveyor), ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Robert Ozbirn, Student Trainee (Land Surveyor), ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Kenneth Roberts, Student Trainee (Land Surveyor), ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Raymond Bonnell, Writer-Editor, FDO
Michael Hinks, Wildlife Biologist, ADO
Delores Long, Secretary, ASO Division of Mineral Resources
Diane Foster, Cartographic Aide, ASO Division of Operations
Manuel Lopez, Cartographic Technician, ASO Division of Operations
Ayn Petty, Training and Safety Specialist, ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Jon Russell, Forestry Technician, AFS

ACCOLADES

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
FOR SUSTAINED SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE

Kay Schaeffer, Secretary, ASO Division of Resources

SPECIAL ACT AWARD

Jack Bowder, Land Surveyor, ASO Division of Cadastral Survey
Jane Miller, Miscellaneous Documents Examiner, ASO Division of Operations
Patricia Baker, Supervisory Land Law Examiner, ASO Division of Operations

QUALITY STEP INCREASE

Thursa Hayward, Microform Equipment Operator, ADO Division of Operations

APPROVED EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION AWARD

Karen E. Clark, (former) Land Law Examiner, ASO Division of Conveyance Management
Patricia A. Smith, Bindery Equipment Operator, ASO Division of Operations

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